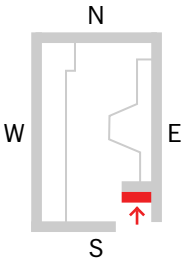
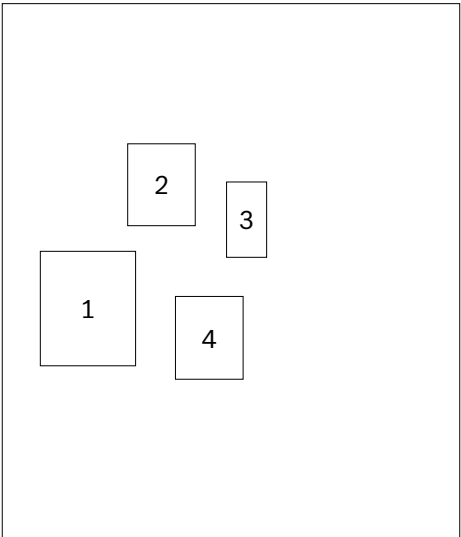


Artist’s Choice

Less Is Morbid—Arthur Jafa

Entrance wall (front)



- 1

Ming Smith
American
David Murray in the Wings, Padova, Italy
1978
Gelatin silver print (hand-painted)
Acquired through the generosity of the Vera Louise Fraser Estate, 1979

In the 1960s, Smith was the first woman to join the Black photography collective Kamoinge—whose name is a Gikuyu word that translates to “a group of people acting together.” This hand-painted print depicts her husband, the acclaimed jazz saxophonist David Murray, before a performance. Jafa recalls being drawn to Smith’s photographic technique of using long exposures to create a blurring effect between her subjects and their surrounding environments.
- 2

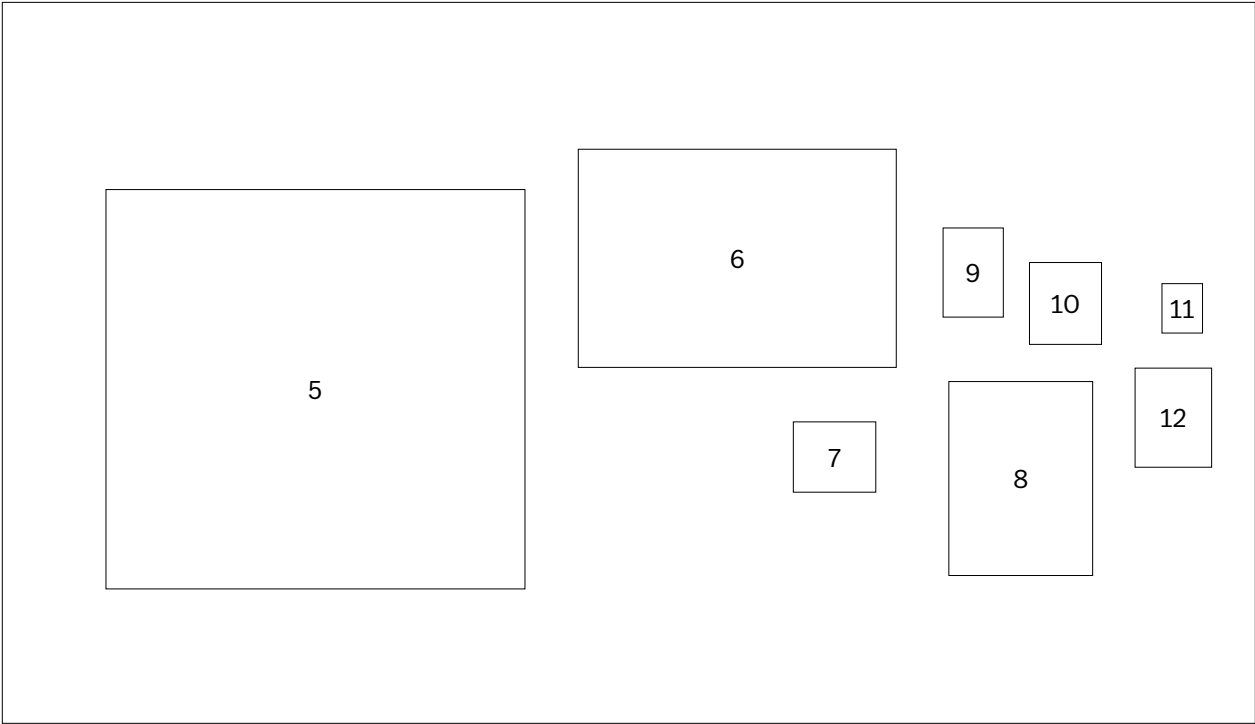
Roy DeCarava
American, 1919–2009
Hallway 1953
Gelatin silver print
Gift of the artist, c. 1957

DeCarava described his photograph of a tenement building interior as being “alive” and “personal.” It was “not just one hallway; it was all the hallways that I grew up in.” With only dim ceiling lights and a tripod, he used a longer exposure to capture the available light—producing an image with grey tones and inky shadows.
- 3

Lygia Clark
Brazilian, 1920–1988
Study for Modulated Space no. 2 (Espaço modulado no. 2) 1958
Cut-and-pasted colored paper on paper
Acquired through the generosity of the Edward John Noble Foundation and Committee on Drawings Funds, 2005
- 4

Kase2 (Jeff Brown)
American, 1958–2011
Super Worm and Kase II c. 1970–86
Ballpoint pen on paper (recto and verso)
Gift of the Gilbert B. and Lila Silverman Instruction Drawing Collection, Detroit, 2018

South wall



- 5

Cy Twombly
American, 1928–2011
Leda and the Swan Rome 1962
Oil, pencil, and crayon on canvas
Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest and The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection (both by exchange), 1994
- 6

Jean-Michel Basquiat
American, 1960–1988
Untitled 1981
Oilstick on paper
Fractional and promised gift of Sheldon H. Solow, 1991
- 7

Objects included in the MoMA exhibition African Negro Art 1935
Gelatin silver print
Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York

Pulled from MoMA's archives, this photograph shows preparations for the Museum's 1935 exhibition *African Negro Art*. For the installation, MoMA borrowed artworks from private collections and European museums who had acquired the works through colonial looting in western and central Africa. Jafa notes both the image's “resounding absence of context around why the unnamed African artists made the objects they made” and the new meanings that those objects accumulated when presented together in a different context.
- 8

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye
British, born 1977
Skylark 2010
Oil on canvas
Gift of Ninah and Michael Lynne, 2017
- 9

Bill Traylor
American, c. 1853–1949
Owls in Tree/Shoeing Mule c. 1939
Pencil on board
Gift of Charles and Eugenia Shannon, 1995
- 10

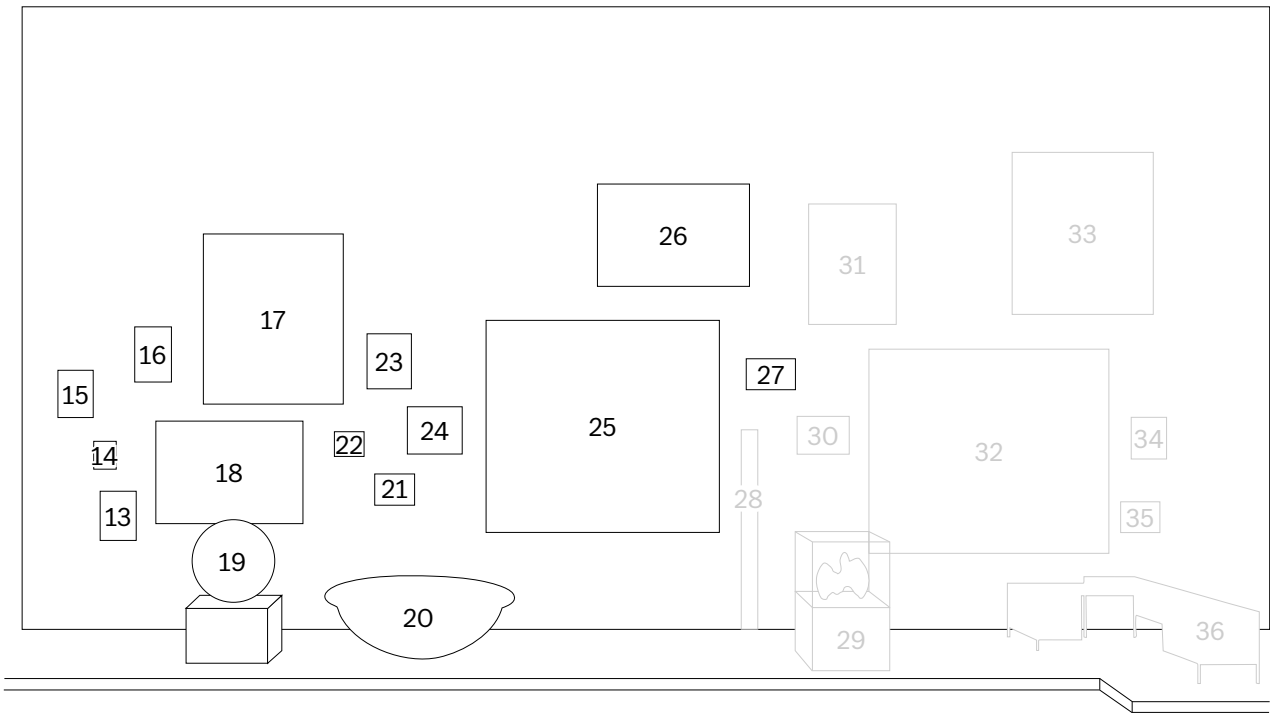
Anthony Barboza
American, born 1944
Untitled 1972
Gelatin silver print
Purchase, 1974

- 11

Sanlé Sory
Burkinabé, born 1943
Untitled 1970–85
Gelatin silver print
Committee on Photography Fund, 2018
- 12

Sigmar Polke
German, 1941–2010
Untitled c. 1973
Gelatin silver print, with applied color
Acquired through the generosity of Edgar Wachenheim III and Ronald S. Lauder, 2011

West wall



- 13

Norman Lewis
American, 1909–1979
City Night 1949
Oil on wood
Gift of Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis, 2010
- 14

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
American, 1902–1981
Dust jacket with chart designed by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., for the MoMA exhibition catalogue *Cubism and Abstract Art*, including his annotations 1936
Offset, printed in color, with pencil annotations
Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, VII.B.5. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York
- 15

Jules Allen
American, born 1947
Untitled from the series *The Hats and Hat Nots* 1987
Gelatin silver print
Purchase, 1990
- 16

Christopher Williams
American, born 1956
Untitled (Sammlung Haubrok, Berlin, Germany, 2007) 2007
Offset lithograph
Gift of the artist, 2013
- 17

Wade Guyton
American, born 1972
X Poster (Untitled, 2007, Epson UltraChrome inkjet on linen, 84 x 69 inches, WG1999) 2015
Digital print
Publisher: Printed Matter, New York
Printers: Supreme Digital and i3 Imaging Group
Edition: 100
Larry Aldrich Fund (by exchange), 2015
- 18

Romare Bearden
American, 1911–1988
The Dove 1964
Gelatin silver print, printed 1971
Gift of Marlene Hess and James D. Zirin, 2015

Bearden set out to make *The Dove* in collaboration with members of the Black artist collective Spiral, but ultimately completed the work on his own. The cascading, irregular shapes of bodies and buildings in the collaged image produce a feeling of movement that evokes the hustle and bustle of a New York City street.

- 19

Fred Eversley
American, 1941–2025
Untitled (Parabolic Lens) 1971
Three-color, three-layer cast polyester
Acquired through the generosity of Michael S. Ovitz and Gary and Karen Winnick, and Committee on Painting and Sculpture Funds, 2017
- 20

Cameron Rowland
American, born 1988
Ingenio 2023
Nineteenth-century sugar kettle, made in England, used in Louisiana
Gift of Lonti Ebers, 2024

In Spanish, the colonial sugar mill was called the *ingenio*, which meant “the engine.” The mill was a necessary component of the sugar plantation. Harvested cane had to be milled quickly to keep it from rotting. The mill operated 16–18 hours a day. Enslaved black people grew the cane, harvested the cane, crushed the cane, and boiled the juice. The mill consisted of a series of open kettles that were made in Europe, exported to the colonies, and used by slaves to reduce cane juice into syrup and raw crystals. The ingenio operated through systematic torture. The regularity of punishment kept the sugar mill in near-constant production. “The slaves received the whip with more certainty and regularity than they received their food. It was the incentive to work and the guardian of discipline.”¹ Sugar was made this way for 400 years.

¹ C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Touissant l’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 12.
- 21

Alfred Stieglitz
American, 1864–1946
The Terminal 1893
Photogravure
Gift of Georgia O’Keeffe
- 22

Hélio Oiticica
Brazilian, 1937–1980
Red Monochrome 1959
Alkyd on board
Gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros through the Latin American and Caribbean Fund in honor of Paulo Herkenhoff, 2016

- 23

John Steuart Curry
American, 1897–1946
John Brown 1939, published 1940
Lithograph
Publisher: Associated American Artists, New York
Printer: George C. Miller
Edition: One of two proofs before an edition of 250
Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund (by exchange), 1990

Curry portrays the white abolitionist John Brown—an evangelical who incited a slave insurrection in 1859—in a cross-like pose. Curry later incorporated the image into his mural for the State Capitol in Kansas, a battleground of pro- and anti-slavery forces during Brown’s life. The artist had recently seen Michelangelo’s *Moses* (1513–15) in Rome, which prompted him to depict Brown with a long beard.
- 24

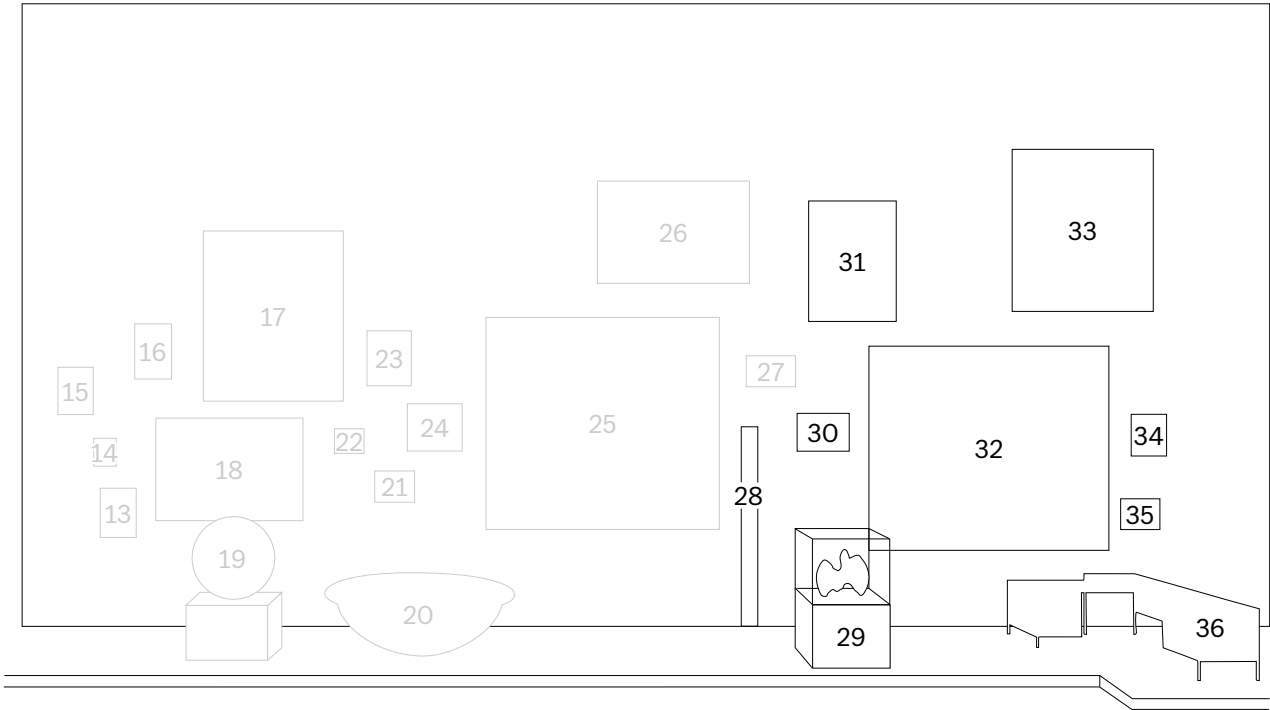
Andy Warhol
American, 1928–1987
Birmingham Race Riot from *X + X (Ten Works by Ten Painters)* 1964
One from a portfolio of ten screenprints
Publisher: Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut
Printers: Ives-Sillman, Inc., and Sirocco Screenprinters, New Haven, Connecticut
Edition: 500
Gift of Harry C. Oppenheimer (by exchange), 1965
- 25

Mark Rothko
American, born Russia (now Latvia). 1903–1970
No. 16 (Red, Brown, and Black) 1958
Oil on canvas
Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, 1959
- 26

Kazuo Shiraga
Japanese, 1924–2008
Untitled 1964
Oil on canvas
Given anonymously, 2019
- 27

Kase2 (Jeff Brown)
American, 1958–2011
Kase c. 1970–86
Felt-tip pen and pencil on paper
Gift of the Gilbert B. and Lila Silverman Instruction Drawing Collection, Detroit, 2018

West wall



- 28

Ellsworth Kelly
American, 1923–2015
Curve XLIII 1984
Sapele wood
Gift of Douglas S. Cramer (by exchange), 2013
- 29

Lygia Clark
Brazilian, 1920–1988
Sundial 1960
Aluminum with gold patina
Gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros in honor of Rafael Romero, 2004

Sundial is one work within a series of movable metal sculptures originally intended to be rearranged by viewers into different shapes and ultimately folded up to lay flat. Clark’s interest in three-dimensional space led her to take on a prominent role in the Brazilian art movement Neo-Concretism, before eventually abandoning it.
- 30

Joseph E. Yoakum
American, 1891–1972
Mt Popocatepel of Sra Madre Occidental Range near Mexico City C.M. 1967
Blue and brown ballpoint pen and colored pencil on paper
Gift of the Raymond K. Yoshida Living Trust and Kohler Foundation, Inc., 2011
- 31

Romare Bearden
American, 1911–1988
The Silent Valley of Sunrise 1959
Oil and casein on canvas
Given anonymously, 1960
- 32

Jean-Michel Basquiat
American, 1960–1988
Glenn 1985
Acrylic, oil stick, and photocopy collage on canvas
Private collection

Basquiat’s title refers to Glenn O’Brien, a writer who was the artist’s friend from age eighteen. O’Brien wrote that Basquiat bantered about the artists Pablo Picasso and Andy Warhol “like they were the heavyweight champions, and he was a contender.” Jafa attributes Basquiat’s artistic greatness to being “a Black everyman” who expressed the complexity of diasporic Blackness poetically by layering text, images, and other found material.

- 33

Willem de Kooning
American, born the Netherlands. 1904–1997
Untitled V 1982
Oil on canvas
Gift of Philip Johnson, 1998
- 34

Frank Auerbach
British, born Germany. 1931–2024
Ruth I 1994
Etching and aquatint
Publisher: Marlborough Graphics Ltd., London
Printer: Studio Prints, London
Edition: 30
Johanna and Leslie J. Garfield Fund, 1994
- 35

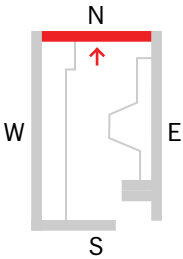
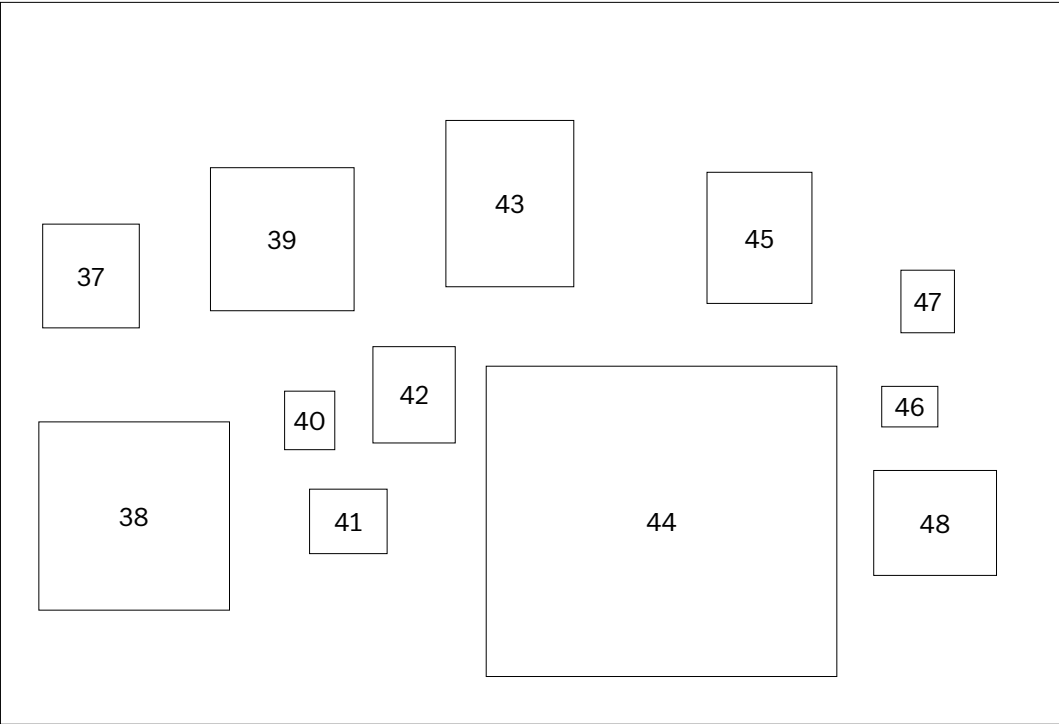
Kase2 (Jeff Brown)
American, 1958–2011
Kase c. 1970–86
Felt-tip pen on paper
Gift of the Gilbert B. and Lila Silverman Instruction Drawing Collection, Detroit, 2018
- 36

Cameron Rowland
American, born 1988
Attica Series Desk 2016
Steel, powder coating, and laminated particleboard, distributed by Corcraft
Rental at cost with funds provided by the Fund for the Twenty-First Century, 2016

The Attica Series Desk is manufactured by prisoners in Attica Correctional Facility. Prisoners seized control of the D-Yard in Attica from September 9th to 13th 1971. Following the inmates’ immediate demands for amnesty, the first in their list of practical proposals was to extend the enforcement of “the New York State minimum wage law to prison industries.” Inmates working in New York State prisons are currently paid \$0.16 to \$1.25 an hour. Inmates in Attica produce furniture for government offices throughout the state. This component of government administration depends on inmate labor.

Rental at cost: Artworks indicated as “Rental at cost” are not sold. Each of these artworks may be rented for 5 years for the total cost of the Corcraft products that constitute it.

North wall



- 37

Frank Auerbach
British, born Germany. 1931–2024
Head of Jake 2006–07
Oil on canvas
Gift of an anonymous donor, 2008
- 38

Piet Mondrian
Dutch, 1872–1944
Broadway Boogie Woogie 1942–43
Oil on canvas
Given anonymously, 1943

Mondrian fled Nazi Germany in 1941 with the help of the art historians Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and Margaret Scolari Barr, MoMA’s first director and his wife. The night Mondrian arrived in New York, the Barrs introduced him to Boogie Woogie music, a form of syncopated jazz characterized by piano playing with repetitive bass patterns on the left hand and improvisational melodies on the right hand.
- 39

Alma Woodsey Thomas
American, 1891–1978
Fiery Sunset 1973
Acrylic on canvas
Committee on Painting and Sculpture Funds, 2015

Thomas’s abstract paintings, like *Fiery Sunset*, often depict the sky and celestial bodies using her trademark streaks of color and thick brushstrokes. Jafa’s inclusion of *Fiery Sunset* reflects his interest in cosmological imagery, which he describes as portraying “individual entities” or “clustered groups,” depending on the perspective of the viewer.
- 40

Roy DeCarava
American, 1919–2009
Untitled c. 1950
Gelatin silver print
Nelson Rockefeller Fund, 1950
- 41

Hélio Oiticica
Brazilian, 1937–1980
Metaesquema No. 348 1958
Gouache on board
Purchased with funds given by Maria de Lourdes Egydio Villela, 1998

- 42

William Eggleston
American, born 1939
Greenwood, Mississippi c. 1972
Dye transfer print, printed 1986
Acquired through the generosity of the John E. Galvin Charitable Trust on behalf of the Crouse Family, 1987

Eggleston photographed everyday life in Tennessee and Mississippi, where he lived. His images capture scenes with a directness that causes them to appear strange or uncanny. Jafa notes the way Eggleston’s Southern Gothic images picture “some very sleazy shit”: “The misbegotten nature of American society often gets normalized. But in Eggleston’s work, it gets denormalized.”
- 43

Ming Smith
American
Invisible Man, Somewhere, Everywhere 1991
Inkjet print, printed 2010
Geraldine J. Murphy Fund, 2010

- 44

Lutisha Pettway
Bars c. 1950
Cotton and denim
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Museum purchase, 2002

This work’s title refers to a pattern of the same name established during the 1930s by the first generation of women quilters in Gee’s Bend, Alabama. Rectangular strips of work clothes, worn by Black American farmers when harvesting cotton, are adjoined in shapes resembling the wood planks of local architecture. This quilting practice continues to take place in intimate settings in Alabama.

- 45

Lucio Fontana
Italian, born Argentina. 1899–1968
Spatial Concept: Expectations 1959
Synthetic polymer paint on slashed burlap
Philip Johnson Fund, 1960

- 46

Kase2 (Jeff Brown)
American, 1958–2011
The Fantastic Partners c. 1970–86
Felt-tip pen on paper
Gift of the Gilbert B. and Lila Silverman Instruction Drawing Collection, Detroit, 2018

This is one of many sketches for graffiti planned on walls and subway cars—spaces for individual experimentation and collaborative making. Kase2, a New York City writer and hip-hop legend also known as King of Style, developed a signature approach he called computer rock, in which he camouflaged the letters of his alias to the point of illegibility.

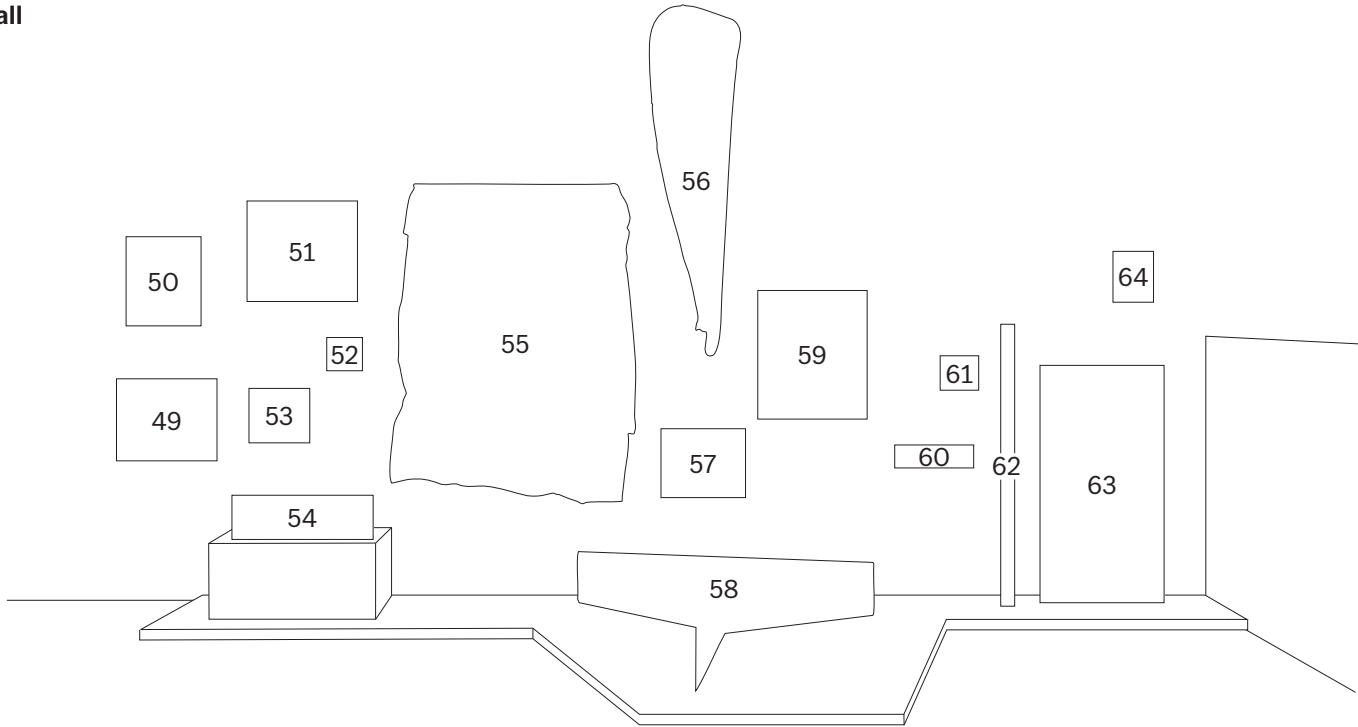
- 47

Robert Ryman
American, 1930–2019
Surface Veil 18 1/2" × 15" 1970
Oil on fiberglass with waxed paper frame and masking tape
Gift of the Denise and Andrew Saul Fund and the Scaler Foundation, 1986

- 48

Beauford Delaney
American, 1901–1979
Composition 16 1954–56
Oil on canvas
Committee on Painting and Sculpture Funds, 2012

East wall



- 49

Kerry James Marshall
American, born 1955
Untitled 2004
Ink and graphite on paper
Gift of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, and purchase, 2004
- 50

Helen Frankenthaler
American, 1928–2011
Ramblas 1987–88
Lithograph, drypoint, and etching
Publisher and printer: Polígrafa Obra Gráfica, Barcelona
Edition: 75
Gift of Dian Woodner in honor of Bill and Bobbie Thomas, 2019
- 51

Torkwase Dyson
American, born 1973
Metamorphosis 1 2023
Aquatint with chine collé
Publisher and printer: Paulson Fontaine Press, Berkeley, California
Edition: 12
Gift of Richard J. Gerrig and Timothy Peterson, 2024
- 52

Arthur P. Bedou
American, 1882–1966
Booker T. Washington on Horseback 1915
Gelatin silver print
Acquired through the generosity of Jill and Norman Korostoff in honor of Edythe Korostoff, 2011
- 53

Jacques-Enguérrand Gourgue
Haitian, 1930–1996
Magic Table 1947
Oil on board
Inter-American Fund, 1948
- 54

Hélio Oiticica
Brazilian, 1937–1980
B16 – Bolide – Box 12, “Archeological” 1964–65
Polyvinyl acetate and vinyl-acrylic paint with earth on wood structure, nylon net, corrugated cardboard, mirror, glass, rocks, earth, and fluorescent lamp
Gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros in honor of Paulo Herkenhoff, 2004

- 55

David Hammons
American, born 1943
Untitled 2010
Acrylic and metallic enamel paint on canvas with plastic
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Nathan L. Halpern and bequest of Richard S. Zeisler (both by exchange), 2011

Jafa has called this canvas not a painting but a “painted,” emphasizing Hammons’s action in making the object. The abstract canvas is cloaked in everyday materials often used for moving house. Barely visible through the plastic’s rips and tears, Hammons’s gestural brushstrokes appear like a secret language being revealed.
- 56

Martin Puryear
American, born 1941
Greed’s Trophy 1984
Steel rod and wire, wood, rattan, and leather
David Rockefeller Fund, 1984

In the mid-1960s, Puryear learned practical woodworking in both Sierra Leone and Sweden. The wire and cage-like shape of this sculpture resemble a hunter’s trap or a fisherman’s basket, although the work was not modeled on any one object’s design. While Puryear’s artistic process takes cues from utilitarian items, Jafa observes that “there’s nothing accidental or unauthored about Puryear’s pieces.”
- 57

Jacob Lawrence
American, 1917–2000
Street Shadows 1959
Egg tempera on board
Gift of Ellen Kern and Gail Garlick in memory of their parents, Jewel and Lewis Garlick, 2000
- 58

Bruce Nauman
American, born 1941
Model for Triangular Depression 1977
Plaster, burlap, expanded steel mesh, and steel beams
Gift of Werner and Elaine Dannheisser, 1996

Nauman’s *Model for Triangular Depression* features three sections of an unembellished plaster model—for a triangle-shaped hole in the ground—which are displayed as a sculpture in and of itself. Jafa, who grew up in a family of bricklayers and builders, is interested in how Nauman’s sculpture “looks like something discarded from a construction site.” Nauman, Jafa explains, “has this ability to extract from spaces of deformation.”

- 59

Richard Prince
American, born 1949
Tell Me Everything 1987
Acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas
Gift of Steven and Alexandra Cohen, 2016
- 60

Donald Judd
American, 1928–1994
Untitled 1969
Brass and plexiglass
Gift of Philip Johnson, 1971
- 61

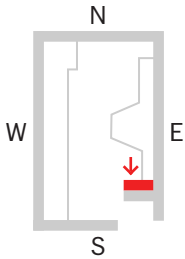
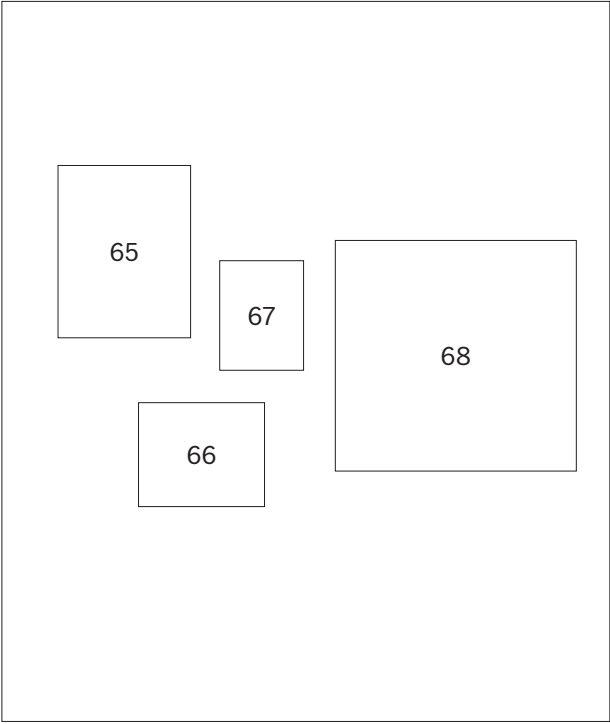
Alvin Baltrop
American, 1948–2004
Untitled from The Piers 1975–86
Gelatin silver print
The Family of Man Fund, 2017
- 62

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe
American, born Germany. 1886–1969
Column Cover for the German Pavilion, International Exposition, Barcelona, Spain 1928–29
Chrome-plated steel
Purchase, 1986
- 63

Wade Guyton
American, born 1972
Untitled 2009
Digital print on plywood
Publisher: Wade Guyton
Printer: Selecto-Flash, New Jersey
Edition: 7
Acquired through the generosity of Peter H. Friedland, 2012
- 64

David Hammons
American, born 1943
Money Tree (for Parkett, no. 31) 1992
Gelatin silver print
Publisher: Parkett Publishers, Zürich and New York
Edition: 70
Riva Castleman Endowment Fund, Lily Auchincloss Fund, and Gift of Parkett, 1998

Entrance wall (back)



- 65

Roy DeCarava
American, 1919–2009
Man Coming Up Subway Stairs 1952
Gelatin silver print
Gift of the artist, 1953
- 66

Ming Smith
American
Mother and Child, Harlem, NY 1976
Gelatin silver print
Committee on Photography Fund, 2018
- 67

Eugene Buechel
American, born Germany. 1874–1954
Mary Jackson from Rosebud and Pine Ridge Photographs February 11, 1923
Gelatin silver print
Gift of David Wing, 1976

Mary Jackson’s photo portrait was taken by Buechel, a Jesuit missionary, on Rosebud Indian Reservation of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. Her hooded, black dress and short hair suggest that Jackson likely participated in activities at Rosebud’s St. Francis Mission. Missions sought to convert Indigenous peoples to Christianity and to eliminate Native spirituality, culture, and language. Her hands folded gracefully, Jackson confronts the camera with a self-assured gaze—enlivening the photo with her presence.
- 68

Gerhard Richter
German, born 1932
Meadowland 1985
Oil on canvas
Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller, Betsy Babcock, and Mrs. Elizabeth Bliss Parkinson Funds, 1985

These annotations were written by Sarah Lou Haddad, Summer 2025 Curatorial Intern; Thomas Lax, Curator; and Cam McEwen, Studio Museum/MoMA Fellow, Department of Media and Performance. Cameron Rowland’s texts are components of the artworks.

Certain works in this display are swapped out for conservation reasons throughout the duration of the exhibition. This handout is accurate for the following dates: November 19–December 18, 2025.